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PIOUS REGRETS

"I was anxious to secure for the expansion of my Government, and for associating opinion in India more closely with the conduct of the war, the support of great political parties", said His Excellency the Viceroy, addressing the Associated Chambers of Commerce at Calcutta on Monday last. But was he, really? We have known his anxiety, and his inclinations too. Did not the Muslim League, one of "the great political parties", offer co-operation and on terms perfectly intelligible and businesslike? Why was that hand of friendship rejected? Was it because in the absence of the Congress the rest of "the great political parties" did not count with the Viceroy? Or was it because he was not prepared to go forward unless all "the great political parties" came in? If the latter was the case, where was the need to expand his Council at all or to set up a Defence Council, which he is anxious to pass on as "National"? To turn down an offer of help on the ground —but without saying so—that the same did not come from the expected quarter is not the way of those who are really anxious for help. That only shows that the Rulers of India are out to appease one particular party—the Hindus, as represented by the Congress —even if that appeasement be at the cost of another party—the Muslims, as represented by the Muslim League. To prefer to go without any support at all, rather than have the support of other than your favourite party is anything but business or statesmanship. War effort or no war effort, what the Viceroy really seems anxious about is not to displease his favourite party, the Congress. Could appeasement be carried farther even by a Chamberlain? And he (the Viceroy) cannot conceal his "bitter disappointment" over Congressmen throwing down "so lightheartedly" the burden of government which they had "asked for and accepted". He is also well aware of "many regrets" which that decision of the Congress has since provoked. He hopes to see the day when governments "ready to use the immense powers and opportunities at their disposal" will be functioning in the "provinces which are still without a Ministerial Government". He may hope as he will, as everybody is at liberty to build castles even in the air, if he so chooses; but one thing at least, besides Death, is certain in this uncertain world. And that is, if he is not already "well aware" of the same, that Muslim India will resist, violently if necessary, any and all moves calculated to perpetuate their persecution or domination by the "bania," be he of the East or of the West.

NOTES

Constituent Assembly

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is reported to have said that there was a lot of misunderstanding in regard to the Constituent Assembly and that he could not conceive of any valid opposition to that suggestion. So far as the Hindus are concerned it would serve their purpose all right. But it is too much to expect other peoples to endorse the proposal which is calculated to harm their vital interests.

The so-called Constituent Assembly would be composed of the entire heterogeneous elements of India's political life - Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, scheduled classes, etc—all represented on the population basis. As all matters would be decided by majority of votes the Hindus alone, on account of their numerical superiority, would have the final say. It is, therefore, no use misleading Muslims and other peoples that the will of the majority would not prevail in certain matters.

The idea presupposes a free country. History does not afford an instance where a slave country has evolved its constitution through a Constituent Assembly. There is no guarantee that Great Britain would implement its decisions. Nor it is conceivable that if the Constituent Assembly decided for severance from the British Crown all Britishers would be withdrawn forthwith, leaving India to the several claimants—all Indians, of course. There is no use refusing to face realities and living in dreamland.

The idea is borrowed from the Constituent Assembly of the French Revolution. But the conditions prevailing in France were different from those prevailing then or now in India. France had one nation, while India has several—the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Dravidians, for example. There were no Hindus in France who coveted what belonged, in all fairness, to others; there were no Muslims whose forefathers had ruled the country for no less than nine hundred years and who now wanted to be masters of their homelands in the continent; there was no alien Government who, according to Pandit Nehru, had created "so many knots and tangles in India". The experiment did not prove a success in France. It accelerated the pace of revolution and brought untold misery upon the people. Is there any guarantee that the unfortunate history of France would not be repeated in India if the so-called Constituent Assembly went astray?

In the circumstances, would it not be advisable if the Indians sit together with clean conscience and settle matters among themselves instead of asking the British Government to convene for them a Constituent Assembly? But if that procedure must be adopted, why should there be only one and not several such assemblies? India is a Continent and, as such, every constituent country must have its own separate Constituent Assembly.

An Overdue Expulsion

The expulsion of Mr. Fazlul Huq from the Muslim League was long overdue. But his acceptance of the leadership of the newly

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